

special reason for further considering it until we are more fully acquainted with the exact nature of the proposals of the Indian Government. The Bill is, no doubt, framed in accordance with the instructions embodied in the dispatch forwarded by Lord George Hamilton to that country, and the Secretary of State's proposals were so studiously moderate in their nature that many people regard them as likely to fall short of what is required for dealing effectively with the evil. Be this as it may, it is unwise to legislate in advance or excess of what is likely to be supported by public opinion. Legislation on such a subject is attended with great difficulties and has many pitfalls for the footsteps of unwary legislators. We can only rejoice meanwhile that something in the shape of an earnest attempt to deal with a terrible evil has been made, and that a very decided and wholesome change has taken place in the state of public feeling in regard to it. That it is absolutely necessary for something to be done to limit the spread of this scourge is generally admitted. The Commander-in-Chief, Major-General Sir Edwin Collen, and the Viceroy of India spoke strongly in favour of the Bill. The Viceroy expressly said that he took his full share of responsibility for the measures which the Government of India proposed to adopt and of which the Bill was a part; and he added that whatever might be thought of the conduct of incontinent persons, no one with a scrap of humanity would hesitate to take any measures in his power to control and check the progress of a disease so insidious and terrible as regards them, and so far-reaching as regards many innocent and helpless human beings. On the score of morality Lord Elgin also considered his position equally clear.

THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON TUBERCULOSIS.

FURTHER sittings of this Commission were held at No. 7, Whitehall-place on July 8th, 9th, and 12th, Sir Herbert Maxwell being in the chair. The following witnesses were examined: Mr. Morgan Hopkin, of Swansea; Mr. Pearson and Mr. Hides, of Sheffield; Mr. Ward, of Middleton, near Manchester; and Mr. Berwick, of Bradford, all of whom represented various butchers' associations, and gave evidence as to direct personal loss from the condemnation for tuberculosis of the carcasses of animals which had been bought as apparently quite healthy. Other witnesses called were Mr. Davies, medical officer of health of Swansea; Dr. Harvey Littlejohn, medical officer of health of Sheffield; Mr. Hedley, chief inspector of the Irish Privy Council, veterinary department; and Mr. Sinclair, superintendent of exports for the Victorian Government. This, we understand, concludes the evidence which the chairman proposes to call; but before considering the report he intends, with other members of the Commission, to visit a few towns in the United Kingdom to see the method of meat inspection adopted in them.

POISONOUS "HOKEY POKEY."

AS with ice-cream, it is not surprising that there should be considerable obscurity surrounding the composition of that largely-consumed sweetmeat which is euphemistically known as "hokey pokey." Last Tuesday an inquest was held in the Islington Coroner's Court on the body of a child aged eight years. She had purchased some "hokey pokey" in the street. Two days later she died, after suffering from acute digestive disorder and presenting the usual symptoms of irritant poisoning. How long are poisons to be disseminated in the street in this most reckless way? Nearly twenty years ago THE LANCET Commission on the Sanitary Condition of the Italian Quarter,¹ reported how filthy was the environment under which ices

were frequently compounded, and if the authorities cannot trace the ingredients to their source, surely they can at least see that the preparation of these edibles (*sic*) are carried out with the strictest attention to sanitary requirements. Every barrow-vendor of ices or, indeed, of any other article of consumption should be registered and compelled to carry his registered number on a metal label like the cabmen and omnibus drivers and conductors. In this way the men dealing out poisonous stuff in the street could be traced, and thus some amount of control over these "itinerants" would be exercised. Some step in this direction is, at any rate, very much needed, especially when the increasing number of deaths from this cause is considered.

COFFEE-PALACES AND COFFEE.

MOST connoisseurs have despaired of ever obtaining coffee-infusion in England of the fine character and aroma of that prepared on the continent, and especially up country in Norway, but we may at least demand that a beverage that is called coffee should contain a certain proportion of the article the name of which it bears. Otherwise coffee may as well be given up for ever. Yet coffee properly made fills an important place in the dietetic category. It is refreshing and stimulating, with a distinct tendency to arouse from a state of stupor and lethargy. It is, in fact, in this connexion that it is sought, though it may be unconsciously. It is, in short, anti-narcotic. According to recent analyses published in the Proceedings of the Society of Public Analysts, some coffee-palace coffee infusions must be practically destitute of those properties which mark coffee as an agreeably refreshing and stimulating beverage. The average amount of caffeine—the crystalline stimulating principle of coffee—in infusions obtained at several establishments in London showed that instead of containing 10 per cent. of coffee they contained very little more than 2 parts per 100. The result of this shocking attenuation means that the infusion contained only a fourth part (0.026 per cent.) at the most of the proper amount of the valuable and active constituent of coffee which gives the beverage its restorative character. In an investigation made by ourselves¹ we found that an infusion made by adding two ounces of coffee to a pint of boiling water (equal to a 10 per cent. infusion) contained 0.11 per cent. caffeine. Doubtless in certain cases coffee-palace coffee, though attenuated from this point of view, possesses plenty of "body" owing to the balance being made up of chicory, milk, and sugar. But these things are not coffee or in any sense to be considered as compensating substitutes. The customer supplied with such stuff is, in our opinion, distinctly defrauded, and it is time that the Food and Drugs Act was brought to bear upon this system of cheating. A systematic raid on the part of the officials entrusted with the carrying out of the Acts would soon put an end to this fraudulent practice, and the sooner such a measure is taken the better.

FOUR GOOD WOMEN.

ON June 9th last Her Majesty the Queen personally bestowed the decoration of the Royal Red Cross upon Sister Mary Helen Ellis, Sister Mary Stanislaus Jones, Sister Mary Anastasia Kelly, and Sister Mary de Chantal Huddon, "in recognition of their services in tending the sick and wounded." This little ceremony at Windsor recalls an early incident in the history of the development of military nursing, a history which practically belongs altogether to the present reign. The four ladies above mentioned are the survivors of a band of eight Sisters of Mercy who served as nurses during the Crimean War. In October, 1854, five-sisters, responding to an appeal of the Right Rev. Dr. Grant,

¹ THE LANCET, Oct. 18th, 1879.

¹ Vide THE LANCET, July 4th, 1894.